



United States Department of the Interior FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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MAY 29 2012

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Challis, Idaho 83226

Subject: Concurrence for Effects from Grazing on Spring Gulch Grazing Allotment, on the
Salmon-Challis National Forest in Lemhi County, Idaho
In Reply Refer To: 14420-2012-I-0246 Internal Use: 114.0100

This letter is the Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) concurrence on effects of the Salmon-Challis National Forest's (Forest) proposal for livestock grazing on Spring Gulch Grazing Allotment (Allotment) in Lemhi County, Idaho to threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and its critical habitat. Bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.; [Act]). In a letter dated May 21, 2012 and received by the Service on May 22, 2012, the Forest requested concurrence on the determination under section 7 of the Act, that the subject action is not likely to adversely affect bull trout and its critical habitat. The letter included a biological assessment entitled *Aquatic Species Biological Assessment for Livestock Grazing on the Spring Gulch Allotment* (Assessment), dated May 19, 2012, describing the effects of the subject action on bull trout and its critical habitat. Information contained in your biological assessment is herein incorporated by reference.

Proposed Action

The action is grazing of approximately 90 cow/calf pairs on the 9,189 acre Spring Gulch Allotment (Assessment, p. 1). The allotment consists of the Spring Gulch, East Fork, and Tater Creek units. Grazing on the allotment will consist of a two pasture rotation system with grazing occurring between July 6 and August 31 (Assessment p. 5). East Fork Unit will always be grazed first and cattle will be moved off of this unit before August 15. The Tater Creek allotment will not be grazed but some incidental grazing may occur. Annual use indicators for bank alteration, woody browse use, upland plant utilization and a greenline stubble height have been established to reduce impacts from grazing (Assessment, p. 5).

Species Presence in the Project Area

Bull trout are present in East Fork Morgan Creek and an unnamed tributary of East Fork Morgan Creek within the East Fork Unit (Assessment, p. 11). Although bull trout are found in Tater Creek below the Forest boundary, they are not present within the allotment. The section of Tater Creek within the Forest boundary is completely isolated from the portion containing bull trout (Assessment p. 11). The Allotment also includes 5.21 miles of proposed critical habitat, 3.21 miles of East Fork Morgan Creek and 2.00 Miles of Tater Creek (Assessment, p. 12).

Potential Impacts and Effects from the Proposed Action

Grazing has the potential to impact fish and fish habitat by trampling redds, impacting stream temperature through reduction in plant shading, reducing complex bank structures by shearing overhanging banks, and

increasing sediment in the stream gravel through bank degradation (Assessment, pp. 20-25). Impacts can be reduced to a point where their effect to bull trout is insignificant using move triggers, management of cattle with fences, active removal of cattle from riparian areas, and exclusion of livestock from spawning areas during spawning. The Forest has included a wide array of measures, including not grazing active bull trout streams during spawning, using annual use indicators to identify when to move cattle, and using riders to keep cattle out of the riparian area, that reduce the impacts on this Allotment to a level where they are likely to be insignificant. Also, East Fork Morgan Creek, its tributary and Tater Creek are dominated by dense vegetation, precluding cattle from accessing much of riparian area (Assessment p. 17).

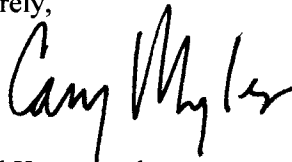
Concurrence

Based on Service review of the Assessment, we concur with the Forest's determination that the project outlined in the Assessment may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect bull trout, or its designated critical habitat. This concurrence is based on physical characteristics of the Allotment, and grazing strategy and protective measures included as part of the proposal. All of these combine to make effects discountable or reduce the scale of any effects that do occur to a point where they are likely to be insignificant to bull trout and their designated critical habitat.

This concludes informal consultation. Further consultation pursuant to section 7(a) (2) of the Act is not required. Reinitiation of consultation on this action may be necessary if new information reveals effects of the action that may affect the listed species or designated habitat in a manner or to an extent not considered in the assessment, the action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the listed species that was not considered in the analysis, or a new species is listed or critical habitat is designated that may be affected by the proposed action.

Thank you for your continued interest in the conservation of endangered, threatened, and proposed species. If you have any questions regarding this consultation, please contact Ty Matthews of this office at (208) 237-6975.

Sincerely,



Acting
for

David Kampwerth
Field Supervisor

cc: SCNF, Salmon (Melvin)
NOAA, Boise (Mabe)